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FEBRUARY 20, 2026 | VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 5

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page 9

JAMES MANNING #16

ASK YOUR VENDOR: WHO DO YOU LOVE?

GROUNDCOVER 15

15 YEARS OF NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

ICE OUT protests in Washtenaw County! **page 8**

Community High students organized a walk-out on Feb. 4, marching from their campus to the Liberty St. Post Office and held a rally. Photo credit: Mike Jones

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GROUNDCOVER NEWS

PROVIDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-DETERMINED INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY POVERTY,
PRODUCING A STREET NEWSPAPER THAT GIVES A PLATFORM TO UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES IN WASHTENAW COUNTY,
PROMOTING AN ACTION TO BUILD A JUST, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of our regular editions of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for $2, keeping all income and tips from each sale. Vendors are the main contributors to the paper, and are compensated to write and report.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. Our paper is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers.

International Network *of* Street Papers

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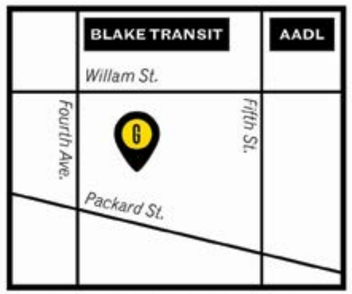
Trainings take 90 minutes. New vendors receive 10 free papers and a badge to start.



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6. **Donate items** — A seasonally appropiate list of items most needed at our office and on the street is available on our website. Drop off anytime we're open.

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Size	Black/White	Color	Dimensions (W x H in inches)
1/8	$110.00	$150.00	5 X 3 or 2.5 X 6.5
1/6	$145.00	$200.00	5 X 4
1/4	$200.00	$265.00	5 X 6.25
1/2	$375.00	$500.00	5 X 13 or 10.25 X 6.5
full page	$650.00	$900.00	10.25 X 13

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Three Months/Six Issues: **15%** off
Six Months/Twelve Issues: **25%** off
Full Year/Twenty-four Issues: **35%** off
Only run for two weeks/one issue: **40%** off
Additional **20%** discount for money saving coupons

ASK YOUR VENDOR

Who do you love?

I've been in love with Geoff Tate from Queensrÿche since forever.
—Cindy Gere, #279

God! My family! **— Mike Jones, #113**

The Circle of Love is growing! You are in it!
— Ken Parks, #490

I'm learning to love myself.
— Terri Demar, #322

I know this is cheesy, but I don't know what love is ... I guess it's feeling good in someone's presence and I feel love when I'm at the office! **— Wayne Sparks, #615**

That's very easy: my mom and dad.
— Will Shakespeare, #258

You! **— Todd Johnson, #689**

Things to celebrate during the coldest months of the year

DENISE SHEARER
Groundcover vendor No. 485

There are plenty of things and people to celebrate in the coldest months of the year. I believe you can celebrate Christmas and Jesus any time of the year. January and February are usually the two coldest months of the year in Michigan. Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month are good and perfect reasons to celebrate in January and February. This is because they are national holidays on the calendar and it is good to remember to celebrate them.

I celebrate Valentine's Day. I spend the day with my boyfriend Richard and we go out to the library or out to eat. I decorate my apartment and I make cards to give to people I know and care about.

I like to cook special meals to celebrate holidays. I cook meals for all the special times like Christmas, MLK Day, Black History and Valentine's Day. I especially like to make simple things like hot dogs, tuna macaroni salad and chicken noodle soup. These are my comfort foods all year round. And, I can't forget about chicken and stuffing dressing!

I think writing nice poems and stories about the holidays is better than marching. I think writing stories is better especially for people with health concerns who may not be able to do a march for a long time. But if someone likes to march, I like that too.

I think the coldest months of the year are perfect to have stay-cations and do artwork and write poems and stories. I look forward to seeing everyone outside once it's warm again!

Of Michigan Men and Wolverine Women

KEVIN KINCHEN
Groundcover vendor No. 691

Two years removed from its first National Championship in 26 years — and concomitant parades, festivities and other-worldly celebrations — the University of Michigan Wolverines Athletic Department is, oddly enough, at an all-time high.

We all lived through the unexpected whirlwind of our very own "Storm of the Century" when now defamed, former Michigan football head coach Sherrone Moore was revealed as a man preoccupied with things well outside of coaching football for the most prestigious football program in all of the college football multiverse. (There is credible evidence that Moore was engaged in an inappropiate relationship with a staff member.) And then, suddenly and unexpectedly, Michigan hired Utah coaching legend Kyle Whittingham on December 26, 2025 instantly restoring order to make all things right in Ann Arbor, and consequently the world.

It would seem that the revelation of our football messiah (Coach K, if you will) has led to a domino effect of order restoration that currently has three Michigan Wolverines teams as serious, betting-odds favorites, National Championship contender toward the ending of their regular seasons: the #2 nationally ranked Men's Hockey team, #1 nationally ranked Men's Basketball team, and the #6 nationally ranked Women's Basketball team.

Leading the way in our surge for multiple National Championships is the hockey team. Ending the month with back-to-back gripping, gritty comeback victories (one in overtime) against their natural enemy and archnemesis the Ohio State Suckeyes, has many considering the Michigan Men's Hockey team the overwhelming betting-odds favorite to win the Natty this season.

Not to be outdone, the #1-ranked Michigan Men's Basketball team finds themselves in the midst of a winning streak highlighted by an exhilarating, defiant run of dominant victories against the best programs in the Big 10, including a mandatory beatdown of the Ohio State Suckeyes on January 23, 2026. Back to back wins against AP top-10 teams in the country — Nebraska and Michigan State — followed the week after. And, they started the month off with an absolute drubbing of Penn State, finishing that contest with a final score of Michigan 110 Penn State 69. Transfer 5-star point guard Elliot Cadeau and All-American Yaxel Lendeborg continue to lead the charge for the Michigan Men's basketball team as they continue their quest of winning U-M its second National Championship in the history of the men's basketball program.

And I would be remiss if I didn't seal it with a kiss. The kiss of the Wolverine Women, as I like to call them. The Michigan Women's basketball team is a young but talented team. Led by reigning Big 10 Freshman of the Year Olivia Olson and Freshmen All-American Syla Swords, they're figuring out how to win big games in the Big 10, and at the right team of the season. They closed out January by getting a big time win against USC (sans megastar Juju Watkins) 73-67. Then, they followed up the men's defeat of the Spartans two days later with a gutsy, road win of their own against Sparty with a final score of Michigan 94 Michigan State 91.

As I write this, it's early in February. The weather is terrible, and times are hard. But at least those of us Michiganders that bleed Maize and Blue know that we have the ever valiant Michigan Men and Wolverine Women of the University of Michigan Athletic Department going to battle for us every day. Fighting not just to survive; but to break through to a better way, and a brighter day. The influx of National Championship parades and celebrations coming to Ann Arbor should have us all looking forward to much better and brighter days.

UPCOMING U-M ATHLETICS TO WATCH

Michigan Women's Basketball
Sunday, February 22, 12 p.m. Michigan vs. Iowa *at Iowa*
Wednesday, February 25, 8 p.m. Michigan vs. Ohio State *at Ohio*
Saturday, Feburary 28, 2:30 p.m. Michigan vs. Maryland *at Crisler Center*

Michigan Men's Basketball
Saturday, February 21, 6:30 p.m. Michigan vs. Duke *at Duke*
Tuesday, February 24, 8:30 p.m. Michigan vs. Minnesota *at Crisler Center*
Friday, February 27, 8 p.m. Michigan vs. Illinois *at Illinois*
Thursday, March 5, 8 p.m. Michigan vs. Iowa *at Iowa*

Michigan Men's Hockey
Friday, February 20, 8 p.m., and Saturday, Feburary 21, 7 p.m. Michigan vs. Wisconsin *at Wisconsin*
Friday, February 26 6:30 p.m. and Saturday February 27, 6 p.m. Michigan vs. Minnesota *at Yost Ice Arena*

In loving memory of Ismael Ahmed

TOMMY SPAGHETTI
Groundcover vendor No. 669

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of Ismael Ahmed, my dear friend and brother-in-law but also my mentor of the highest order. My relationship with Ish is long and storied. I met him in 1978 at the Freezer Theater in the Cass Corridor. He attended my concert and purchased two records from our merch table. It was a practical joke because we glued our own labels onto other artists' 45s (cheap thrift store acquisitions). This marketing ploy was intended as a prank on our fan base. After all, we were a 1970s plagiarized version of the Merry Pranksters.

Ismael at our first meeting was quixotic at best, igniting a relationship that lasted 45+ years.

My sister Mary brought Ismael home to meet our family and he fell in love with my other sister Margaret; he married her and produced Ena, a wonderful child who looks and speaks like her eloquent father. (My sister Mary, who introduced Ish to my family, preceded him in death 66 days prior.)

Attending Ish's memorial was a 'must' for me and apparently for some of the most esteemed dignitaries in the state of Michigan: Andy Levin, Mike Duggan, Rashida Talib, Bob Ficano, Steve King, Muruga Bookervich, James Zogby to name but a few.

Ismael Ahmed's impact on society can't be diminished:

Co-founder of ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services) in Dearborn.

Ismael Ahmed. His wife and Spaghetti's sister, Margaret, is pictured behind.

ACCESS is a social service agency that feeds, houses, clothes and administers health services for thousands of people every year.

see **ISMAEL** page 7 ➡

community **EVENTS**

AN EVENING OF SCENES: U-M RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE PLAYERS
February 20-21, 8 p.m. RC Keene Theater, 701 East University. *RC students direct and perform this popular semiannual program of five student-written comedy sketches. Pay what you can.*

FAMILY PROGRAM: WINTER SURVIVAL
Saturday, February 21 2-3:30 p.m. County Farm Park, 2230 Platt Rd., Platt Road Pavilion. *Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission naturalist Shawn Severance leads a family-oriented program in learning how to build a foolproof winter campfire and a debris hut shelter. S'mores provided, please bring anything else you would like to cook over a fire. Free, preregistration required.* parksonline.ewashtenaw.org

UNITY AGAINST EMPIRE: BLACK AND LATINE SOLIDARITY IN STRUGGLE
Tuesday, February 24, 6-7:30 p.m. U-M School of Education Room 1315, 601 E. University Ave, Ann Arbor. *Black History Month teach-in on Black and Latine revolutionary unity, examining the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords and the Rainbow Coalition. We'll explore how their shared commitment to anti-imperialism, collective liberation and the Global South offers lessons for our movement today.*

NATURAL FEATURES: BUILDING THE RESILIENCE OF OUR PEOPLE AND OUR PLACE with MICHIGAN BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Tuesday, February 24, 7 p.m. U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens Auditorium, 1800 N. Dixboro Rd. *Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations analyst Sean Reynolds discusses the city's 10,000 Trees Initiative, its Pollinator-Aware Yard Care program, and its air quality monitoring program, all part of the Ann Arbor's ambitious A2Zero plan to equitably achieve community-wide carbon neutrality.*

"TOE TAPPERS" WASHTENAW COMMUNITY CONCERT BAND
Thursday, March 5, at 7:30 p.m., Washtenaw Community College Towsley Auditorium, 4800 E Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor. *Horses, whistlers, trombones, and ... Darth Vader! Mark your calendar now and plan to join us for a toe-tapping good time as we open the new year with tunes that will dazzle, delight, and leave you wanting more! Light refreshments to follow the concert. Free parking and admission.*
Submit an event to be featured in the next edition: submissions@groundcovernews.com

Redeeming Scriptures Bible Study
SAINT AIDAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 1679 BROADWAY, ANN ARBOR, 48105
STAIDAN.ORG
WEDNESDAY EVENINGS IN LENT
BEGINS 2/25
GROUP STARTS AT 6:45 PM-8:30 PM
Many of us look to the Bible as a source of healing and liberation. At the same time, the bible has clearly been used as a means of abuse and oppression. This study, led by Rev. Joe Summers, explores why the same text can be used in such different ways and invites participants to read scriptures with new ears, listening for voices of justice, freedom, human dignity, and care for creation.
Learn more and sign up!

What's Happening at the Ann Arbor District Library

Open 10am–8pm Daily
Visit any of our five locations across town to browse books, magazines, newspapers, and more. Check out movies, CDs, art prints, musical instruments, or even home tools—you name it! Enjoy fast and free WiFi, study and meeting rooms, and plenty of comfortable spaces to relax or hang out.

Unusual Stuff to Borrow
There's more to borrow at AADL than books, music, and movies. To name a few, there are games, telescopes, stories-to-go kits, and home tools. Check out these unusual yet handy items during your next library visit.

Washtenaw Library for the Blind & Print Disabled at AADL
This free service loans books, magazines, & videos in alternative formats (audiobooks, large print, braille books & magazines, and descriptive video) to individuals who are unable to read or use standard printed materials. Visit aadl.org/wlbpd/apply to apply.

FEATURED EVENT

Sunday, March 8 • 11 AM–4 PM • Downtown Library
Celebrate Super Mario Day at AADL with themed activities, bingo, warp pipe bean bag toss, photo ops, crafts, Mario Kart, and more. Costumes are welcome! Check out the schedule of events at aadl.org/marioday.

Sheriff sues BOC over 'arbitrary and capricious' Resolution No. 25-249

MARIE
Groundcover contributor

In a civil lawsuit filed in December 2025, County Sheriff Alyshia Dyer accused the County Board of Commissioners (BOC) of overstepping its authority when it transferred control of human resources for the sheriff's department to the county administration. The suit alleges that the BOC's action is part of a pattern of behavior in which commissioners have attempted to undermine the sheriff and her operations.

The resolution moves four key personnel, who are appointed special deputies under the Michigan Constitution, from the Sheriff's office to the county HR department. In addition a dedicated county HR liaison would support the daily functions within the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office.

According to the resolution, the BOC "is deeply concerned by widespread reports of misconduct and detrimental internal operations within the Sheriff's Office's internal HR function, including but not limited to allegations of intimidation, punitive retaliation and a systemic breakdown of employee confidence." The BOC has failed to provide any specifics about the allegations.

In her suit, case No. 25-002227-CZ, Dyer is requesting relief preventing the transfer of the four HR personnel, who are appointed special deputies. The suit claims the resolution violates Michigan's 1963 Constitution, and is "ultra vires, arbitrary and capricious." A link to the 87-page filing may be found at tcweb.ewashtenaw.org/PublicAccess/CaseDetail.aspx?CaseID=442942.

According to uslegalforms.com, "Ultra vires is a legal term derived from Latin, meaning 'beyond powers.' It refers to actions taken by a corporation or its officers that exceed the authority granted to them by law…"

According to law.cornell.edu/wex, "To be capricious is to have an unpredictable, sudden, and unaccountable change in attitude or behavior. Arbitrary and capricious conduct is willful and unreasoning action without consideration or regard for the facts and circumstances."

According to the lawsuit, Dyer learned about the resolution via social media the day before the vote. One of the challenges with the resolution as passed includes the HR special deputies' job descriptions, as they include responsibilities specific to the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement (MCOLE) standards, state laws, federal mandates and established law enforcement best practices. HR job descriptions and special deputization details may be viewed in the exhibits section of the lawsuit.

The BOC is reported to have expressed concerns related to personnel issues during the Dec. 3 BOC meeting. On Dec. 18, County Administrator Gregory Dill, Commission Chair Katie Scott and Vice-chair Justin Hodge were interviewed on the 1290AM Lucy Ann Lance Show, and explained that a motivating factor for the resolution included an ongoing sexual assault investigation, and lessons from the #MeToo movement. In the lawsuit Dyer states that her approach to the sexual assault allegation is through an interdependent investigation by an outside agency. This is recognized as a best practice.

If the BOC, WCSO personnel or residents are concerned about law enforcement misconduct, a complaint may be filed with the U. S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Misconduct complaints handled by the DOJ include federal criminal enforcement such as "excessive force, sexual assault, intentional false arrests, theft or the intentional fabrication of evidence resulting in a loss of liberty to another."

Federal civil enforcement includes the police misconduct provisions which "make it unlawful for State or local law enforcement officers to engage in a pattern or practice of conduct that deprives another person of rights protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States." More information about addressing police misconduct law and how to file a complaint with the DOJ may be found at www.justice.gov.

In the lawsuit the Sheriff reports learning about the resolution on social media, and several constituents have expressed concerns about online attacks of Dyer. The lawsuit references online messages that it calls reprimanding, chastising and condescending with the implication that the sheriff reports to them and not to the voting public.

To gain an outside perspective into how HR is handled in other sheriff departments, a nearby county Sheriff was interviewed. This Sheriff stated, "If all 83 [Mich.] sheriffs were interviewed you would probably get 40 different answers. Smaller departments do what they need to do, and larger ones have specified personnel [with differing job titles and functions]." The nearby county Sheriff shared they have an "HR mix kind of. The Sheriff's department is a unique animal as there is a co-employer relationship. For example, I don't fund the employees, they [the county] do, but they can't say who I fire, hire or discipline. Onboarding is dual, through county HR programs such as sexual harassment, but I have my own training procedures and protocols. The executive assistant handles a lot, including primarily education. Once the initial hire is complete, we keep our own records, except pay raises go through county finance. Discipline stays here until they leave. Medical file and corrections cleared is kept in a separate protected file. Internal investigations start with the sergeant and then go through the sheriff, if they are reviewed and unfounded then they go to the executive assistant for filing."

The month before the resolution was presented, Dyer gave a presentation to the BOC about the status of the WCSO budget, which includes a gap in funding for the jail. The jail budget shortfall is not new to Sheriff Dyer. Under Sheriff Clayton there were nearly identical budget shortfalls. While a large portion of the WCSO budget relates to jail funding, much of the anticipated shortfall is due to unbudgeted-for contracts, as well as to decreasing job vacancies for budget cuts, which increased overtime costs. Many jail contracts were negotiated during COVID. These contracts and budget expectations have been called predatory and harmful to physical health, mental health, dietary needs and staffing for WCSO personnel and inmates. See Groundcover News, Mar. 7, 2025, "Dive in Sheriff's Budget Reveals Predatory Revenue Streams" for more in-depth coverage of a recent Freedom of Information Act request.

The BOC answer to WCSO shortfalls, during the Nov. 18 meeting, was a demand for Dyer to implement more lockdowns and a 2% decrease in expenditures. According to the Sheriff 90% of inmates are in pre-trial diversion, and WCSO personnel have come to BOC meetings to remind the BOC, "They are innocent."

During the meetings following the budget presentation, residents and WCSO staff expressed their concerns over BOC statements during meetings and on social media — related to the Sheriff, the treatment of inmates and working conditions. Residents expressed concerns over lockdowns, as it shows a lack of understanding rights, a lack of empathy about what the lockdown experience means and a lack of fiscal knowledge about the cost of incarceration.

Lockdowns mean inmates aren't allowed to participate in programming such as substance use disorder treatment, which may be a condition of release. Lockdowns mean not being able to manage basic hygiene, and they further limit timely mental health and physical health care access. BOC changes to staffing vacancies have increased the hours worked per day, increased wages, decreased health for inmates and decreased the health of deputies.

A few WCSO deputies, who are also Washtenaw residents, backed the Sheriff's concerns about lockdowns, violence, inhumane treatment and lawsuits. Several jails and state prisons have recently been found in violation of federal laws. Wisconsin has seen multiple cases this decade, including court cases out of Waupun prison and the surrounding Waukesha County. Multiple news outlets have covered stories about unsanitary conditions, reports of drug use, neglect, abuse, bug and rodent infestations and several inmate deaths.

Washtenaw County Edition's Jan. 7, overview of the BOC meeting (on YouTube), provided an updated case status showing the defendants were given until Feb. 19, 2026 to respond. The case was reassigned to Judge John McBain Jr. in Jackson County after all Washtenaw judges disqualified themselves from presiding over the case as to do so "would create the appearance of impropriety."

In lieu of a final judgement in the HR resolution lawsuit, there is room for WCSO improvement beyond simply making cuts to the budget. At this time, Dyer's efforts include working to improve jail conditions, mental health of deputies, decreased response times and maintaining MCOLE licensing standards.

WCSO, like most departments across the country, is not accredited, and accreditation is not mandatory. According to the nearby Sheriff, "Not many departments are" as "it's relatively new."

In 2016 the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police (MACP) created the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Program. In 2020, the Michigan Sheriffs' Association joined MACP's efforts to enhance policing standards through accreditation. The nearby Sheriff interviewed described the accreditation program as being

see **SHERIFF** next page ➡

Preparing for a general strike

KEN PARKS
Groundcover vendor No. 490

The level of violence to which we have become accustomed has been so blatantly escalated with the scapegoating of immigrant communities, that government agents are becoming a threat to the general public. Dissent is being made the enemy by the supremacist ideology of the most elite of the capitalist ruling class. This elite is much smaller than the top 1% and is at the top of the chain of command. The top deciders and the most powerful enjoy anonymity so that they cannot be held responsible and everything looks like an act of God.

Mark Twain and Upton Sinclair were some of our folk heroes who spoke truth to power in their day. When the servants of the elites face the public with declarations about security and stability as if their experts are the sole relevant actors, people like Twain and Sinclair have exposed them.

All the world is a stage and the play of supremacism seizes center stage until the audience gets up and declares its independence. Our everyday life is the real stage and all the media spectacles, entertainment extravaganzas, sports and wars do not really change the foundation of labor that makes all this possible.

Imagine if we used our labor power to create the world we want to live in. Billions are spent to make sure you do not think about this.

Commodity fetishism is the culture we live in. Academia is a specialty that glories in trivia with a display of intelligence that dazzles and confuses. I once was assistant to a professor whose Ph.D. thesis described how Indians took over a fort because the gates could not be closed due to dirt buildup. The thesis had no discussion of land sovereignty, treaties or critique of Manifest Destiny.

Supremacism, the central ideology that undermines any struggle to finish the American revolution, is yet to be dismantled. This is a central task of intellectual workers if we are to create "liberty and justice for all." The ideas you believe in create the world you live in.

It is too easy to fall into compliance with the standard model. Do you want a job? Who writes the terms and conditions? Touch or sign here. Bureaucratic helpers such as social workers, case managers, senior specialists, human resources and mental health professionals do not want to evaluate terms and conditions. They are written by lawyers whose brilliance is used to camouflage the slavery that is hidden in terms and conditions.

All bureaucrats advise "just sign" so we can move forward and you can survive in the slavery of terms and conditions. You can end up in court in an eviction suit you never understood and then they want you to pay their lawyers' fees. It's all there in the terms and conditions that no one reads. Legalese is an insult to the English language. Lawyers write the legislation that legislators pass without reading because they have advisors, probably those same lawyers.

When you realize your labor power is trapped in terms and conditions made by the bosses, you may consider revolutionary action to change terms and conditions so that your reality is respected. The bosses are absolutely dependent on the working class to make the wealth that they exploit. At least read a good summary of "Das Kapital," the landmark book by Karl Marx, so that you understand surplus capital, wages and profits. Many of you understand this when it is pointed out. The Democracy at Work Institute is a good place to search; there are podcasts and other materials.

There is plenty of homework in my writing. As a lifelong student, I have learned that post-graduate work begins as you age — with curiosity as your guide. At what age do we reach maturity? Do what you can now as the best preparation for the future. It does not matter if you have more lifetimes. Reality is here now and inseparable from the timeless time that is the context for past, present and future.

A calm and clear mind is the best way to prepare for anything.

If you have not learned the seven points of good posture, check in with Khenpo Choephel at Karuna Buddhist Center and learn the stages of mindful awareness that promote calm and clarity.

Ideas that promote the context for a good view of reality will thrive in a calm and clear mind. It's good to start the day with "offerings down, prayers up" as our indigenous community teaches. Disciplined curiosity will be your companion on the path of awakening. Much gratitude to all those who help me on the path.

The current talk of a general strike is of a one-day event encompassing work, school and shopping. A more advanced general strike would mean no work until terms and conditions that are working-class-friendly become the norm. This is the revolution to which we invite each other.

Peter Block has much to say about life-friendly communication and community building. I was sent one podcast and will follow up on this amazing resource. When we learn to listen and communicate, friends, family, coworkers and neighbors will discover new meaning in our lives. The struggle is good.

I mentioned the saints in my everyday life who replaced my stolen tricycle. I will continue our mutual work, especially revolutionary food. The goal of a healthy gut biome is worthy of study and practice. Food as medicine is a theme that goes from Hippocrates to Groundcover News' Food Special Edition magazine. The struggle continues, Hasta la Victoria Siempre.

Remember the sacred nature of your labor power as you engage in the art of living.

Begin the day with a few minutes of calm and clear awareness and cultivate compassionate intention. This is the best preparation for the work of a general strike.

➡ **SHERIFF** from last page

agency specific, with over 100 required written standards for policies and procedures. "Not only do you have to have a policy, you have to live it out and show proof." During the accreditation assessment when issues are identified, efforts are made to rectify the issues, then accredited agencies are required to renew every three years.

At this time no Washtenaw County law enforcement agencies are on MACP's list of accredited agencies. Accreditation has the potential to improve the transparency, access and trust the community has with the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office.

➡ **ISMAEL** from page 4

Ish started ACCESS with his grandmother (Aliya Hassen) who told me one of the most amazing stories about pride, ignorance and dishonor. "A young Arab woman was showing signs of pregnancy. Because the young girl was in her mid-teens her father demanded to know the identity of her sexual partner. The young teen denied having sex with anyone. As time went on her belly grew larger. The parents were dreading the public embarrassment of an unwed, pregnant daughter. They killed her … An autopsy was done revealing a large tumor in the child's abdomen rather than a developing fetus."

Ismael Ahmed co-founded the National Arab American Museum in Dearborn, a very distinguished showroom depicting the positive influence of Arabic culture. My personal favorite exhibit is the astrolabe, a device that uses star position to calculate time.

Ismael Ahmed also started the Concert of Colors now in its 35th year. CofC is metro Detroit's diversity festival which pays tribute to the many different ethnic groups that beautify our region. "Diversity is a strength not a weakness" — an important concept in our modern day resurgence of white supremacy and Maga hatred.

Ismael Ahmed was chosen by Governor Jennifer Granholm to be executive director of Michigan Department of Human Services. "Ismael was selected to boost morale" in the worst economy, 29 months of steady decline.

Ismael Ahmed hosted the very popular and always stimulating world music program, "This Island Earth," on WDET radio.

Ismael Ahmed was hand-picked by Joe Biden to be on the National Education Association board.

Ish passed January 31, 2026.

Truly a master of community relations. I was fortunate to know Ish intimately enough to know his idiosyncratic laugh, his sense of humor and his infectious smile.

My bewilderment, however, is: How can anyone be so accomplished in such a short amount of time? 79 years on planet earth. Ismael Ahmed's passing from carcinoma seems to create a huge deficit in our moral commitment to each other. Ismael was a successful community organizer who beckons to us to be like him and continue the work in front of us.

ICE Out protests and actions in Washtenaw!

MIKE JONES
Groundcover vendor No. 113

Recent immigration arrests in Ypsilanti; the killings in Minneapolis, Minn., of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti; and the arrest of five-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos and his father, Adrian Conejo Arias, by U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, have sparked anti-ICE protests in Washtenaw County.

As a result of ICE activities, communities all over America have been scheduling weekly protests.

Since the start of 2026 Ann Arbor has had many significant, organized protest actions against ICE. Demonstrations included an "ICE Out for Good" rally in early January, and continued through February with walkout high school protests.

Since early January, multiple ICE-out protests have occurred in Washtenaw County, with regular weekly demonstrations taking place on Saturdays at four major intersections in Ann Arbor: Plymouth and Green Road, Jackson Avenue and Maple Road, Stadium Boulevard and Main Street, Washtenaw Avenue and Huron Parkway

In early February 2026, hundreds of students from multiple Washtenaw County high schools, including Pioneer, Skyline, Huron, and Community High Schools in Ann Arbor, as well as Augusta Township's Lincoln High School, held walkouts and protests against ICE operations. These student-led demonstrations were organized to raise awareness and protest recent ICE activity in the area.

People in communities across the United States and Washtenaw County are not just protesting, they're organizing response teams to support and protect their vulnerable immigrant neighbors. Teams in these communities provide practical needs like food, transportation and companionship, alongside connecting them with legal aid for immigration or safety concerns, and advocating for policies that protect their rights.

Late January 2026, ICE arrested multiple individuals in the Ypsilanti area during a targeted operation. Identified individuals in connection with these incidents include Delmy Yamileth, Molina Vasquez, Gissel Alejandra Pavon Nunes, Carolina Hernandez-Aviles and Elder Alberto Veliz-Mencia. Another individual was detained during a targeted, separate vehicle stop, not at a school bus stop as initially reported.

The Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office and Ypsilanti Community School officials have expressed concern and dismay over the timing and location of the arrests.

Ypsilanti Community Schools Superintendent Alena Zachery-Ross said, "The district aims to be a safe place for students," and urged parents to have plans in case of immigration law enforcement presence.

A spokesperson for ICE said the agency "does NOT target schools for enforcement actions or bus stop locations. To be clear, NO children were present during these arrests." The people detained were in the United States illegally, the agency said, "and will remain in ICE custody pending immigration proceedings and will receive full due process."

The school district said it does not voluntarily cooperate with ICE and provides support to affected families.

If you are looking for information on a potentially detained friend or family member, you can use the ICE Detainee Locator or call (866) 347-2423.

It is estimated 400 Huron High School students walked out of classes on Feb. 4. Above by Annabella Mi, below by Brody Turner.

Photo essay: A2 high-schoolers walk-out in protest of ICE Feb. 4

Above: Skyline High students walked out at 12:40 p.m. Photo submitted by Eagles Abolish ICE.

Community High students marched from their campus to the Liberty St. Post Office and rallied. Photo credit: Mike Jones

Do you count? Point In Time Count 2026

STEVEN
Groundcover contributor

One night, many years ago in the deep cold, ensconced in our bedding atop our cardboard beds after the sun had gone down, our small group of outdoor dwellers under the Burnside Bridge in Portland, Ore., saw a group of well-dressed strangers approach. They briefly attempted to explain that they were conducting the Point in Time (PIT) Count. They got as far as explaining that PIT is a nationwide governmental attempt to get an idea of the extent of the homeless population in the United States. But they were interrupted by one of my campmates rudely chasing them off. I shrugged and tucked back in against the cold January air.

This was my first exposure to the PIT Count. I was intrigued. It seemed on its face stupid and unscientific. One data set from one night in January, of all months? When it was cold so fewer people would be out? I wondered. My buddy had chased them away before we could get much into the questionnaire, so I didn't know what that might entail. All in all, I was glad to have been counted. It was one of the very few times as a homeless single man I felt that I counted for something, even something so inherently, obviously inaccurate. It's better than no count, I concluded. I went to sleep and didn't think on it again for many years. All these years later, I've been more often homeless than not, and I've never been counted since that night in Portland 2,000 miles away.

Here's the reasoning behind the PIT Count, per the National Alliance to End Homelessness: "The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that communities receiving federal funds from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program conduct a count of all *sheltered* people in the last week of January annually. Electronic administrative records are used to enumerate people living in emergency shelters and transitional housing. *Unsheltered* counts are required every other year, although most communities conduct an unsheltered count annually."

This is a lot to unpack, so I'll try to do it justice in broad strokes. The Homeless Assistance Grants, administered by HUD, were first authorized by Congress in 1987 as part of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This act was an attempt to legally define homelessness, and established an Interagency Council on the Homeless. It was later updated by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. These are the laws HUD follows to inform its decisions on what organizations get what funding. The PIT Count is one of HUD's mechanisms to determine need per community, in our case, Washtenaw County.

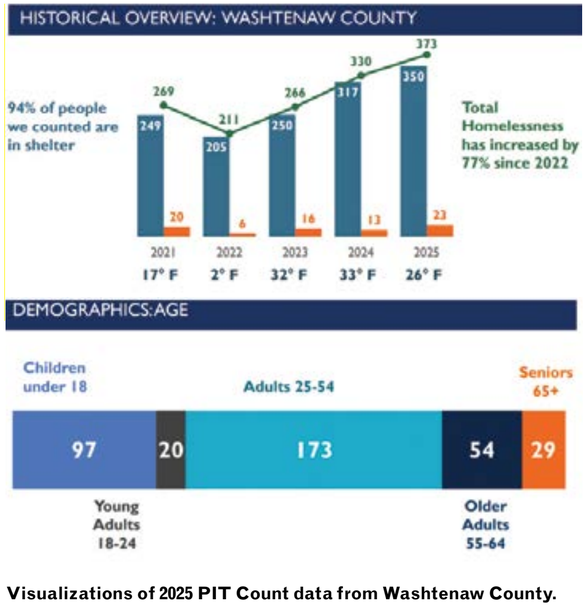
Each year in January, teams of volunteers go out to track down and count people who may be homeless. When possible, they use a specific questionnaire to gain more information than just a count of homeless people on one cold night in January.

Some of the 2025 PIT findings in Washtenaw County, according to the County Office of Community & Economic Development, included:

- 350 people were considered sheltered because they were in emergency or transitional housing.
- 23 people were considered unsheltered because they were on the streets or a place not meant for human habitation (such as a tent or car).
- Total homelessness in Washtenaw County has increased 77% since 2022.
- Veteran homelessness is down 73% since 2021.
- 97 children under 18 were homeless, representing 26% of the county's homeless population.

The detailed questionnaire has some, in my view, very problematic questions. Some of the questions I have issues with, and I think many other homeless people may have issues with, involve giving your full first and last name and a nickname. It asks for your date of birth, and instructs the census taker to guess their birth year if there is no answer forthcoming. It asks what specific psychological or emotional issues you may have, with depression and schizophrenia cited as examples. It asks what gender you identify as, and whether you have AIDS or an HIV-related illness. The questions at the end of the survey, couched in a vague promise of unspecified "help," ask where and when a person might be found on any given day.

So, so what, right? These make sense, right? You don't want to count people more than once so they should give you some personally identifiable information. It's good, isn't it, to know how many homeless are homeless because of mental illness? Don't we want to know if being transgender is a cause of homelessness? But the personally identifiable information could be used to steal your identity. And do you really want to put your full name on a federal form then list yourself as mentally ill? As having AIDS?



Visualizations of 2025 PIT Count data from Washtenaw County.

The questions are especially problematic after you read HUD's recent announcement indicating major shifts in policies in awarding funds. Putting aside the very real fears of what an authoritarian regime might do (has done) with this information, let's look at HUD's recent changes for charities or organizations receiving funds. In a news release in November, HUD encouraged faith-based organizations to apply and said it, first, reserves the right to "reduce or reject" a project's application for using "a definition of sex other than as binary in humans," and second, will reject projects practicing what's known as harm reduction — a way of addressing the risks of drug use through measures such as free syringe programs or fentanyl tests.

HUD is indicating it can keep money from harm reduction programs and anyone subscribing to nonbinary gender identification. And in its PIT survey, HUD is asking homeless people if they are drug addicts or nonbinary.

Here are some questions I didn't see on the survey. There was nothing about cost of living increases or wage increases (or the lack thereof), not even a question on if the person is employed. Was being incarcerated a reason for not gaining employment or losing housing? I know several people firsthand who lost jobs and homes over even just a few days of being in jail. A major part of why I became homeless was my rent increasing from an already too high 39% of my income to 49% of my income in three years.

These numbers and statistics are (mostly) useful knowledge. If our government is going to function in a way to allow people to go hungry and unsheltered, then I guess we should try to figure out how many of our citizens are experiencing this. Or maybe use a minuscule percentage of the U.S. budget to just house and feed anyone who wants it?

In the meantime, this is what we've got. Washtenaw County is 14% Black, but Black people make up over half (52%) of the homeless population. As noted above, 97 children under 18 walked our frozen January streets in 2025 not knowing where they might sleep on any given night.

The first PIT Count was in 2005. We now have 20 years of data, and here we are with hundreds of disenfranchised, underrepresented people stripped of their agency, living as less-than in our own communities. The questions the government asks do not hide their conflict of interests and anti-trans, faith-based biases. The questions not asked stand in sharp contrast to the ones that are asked. No questions about economic or housing insecurities caused by rising rents, rising food costs, rising child care costs, rising gas prices, rising energy bills. Plenty of questions about what did you, you degenerate homeless person, do to end up in this sad lowly state? Which was it? Drugs? It was drugs, wasn't it?

from the ARCHIVES

15 YEARS OF NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

Pedicab business up and running

KEVIN SPANGLER
Groundcover vendor No. 307

I am finding my way here. I found a great place to stay in Ann Arbor — a perfect location for my pedicab business.

I am in the beginning phase of the best pedicab tour company in Ann Arbor. So far I have the pedicab, which is most important. I have been only doing this for a few weeks so far, cruising around Ann Arbor in my sea-foam-green, human-powered taxi.

I have had many riders so far and they've been so great, enjoying the pedicab experience.

Riding on a pedicab is different than riding in a car or walking. You just sit back, listen to the music and watch the scenery while I pedal you around beautiful historic Ann Arbor, and I learn about you and you learn a little bit about me. I have even been able to trade services with people in some instances, in place of taking money, and hope to continue using this barter system in the future. Other forms of payment I plan to accept are: cash, credit cards, Bitcoin, artwork, silver, and rCredits (a mutual credit system accepted as currency by local businesses).

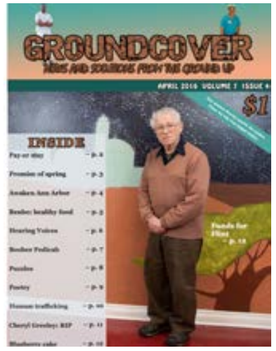
The bike is a Main Street Pedicab, made and built in America. I am extremely pleased with the exceptional quality of the taxi cab. I wanted the best for my patrons. I believe I got the best, while supporting our local American economy.

My overarching pedicab business goals include preventing my fellow patrons from getting behind the wheel while being intoxicated. My short-term pedicab goals are getting on Instagram and Twitter, creating business cards and a website.

I will create and offer multiple planned pedicab tours, including a Slow Food Crawl of the Ann Arbor restaurants that source their ingredients locally, a tour along the Huron River and a tour of the artwork around Ann Arbor.

My long-term business goal is to establish a thriving tour business in Ann Arbor where I teach and train people in transition, like myself, to make a living and support themselves. Job creation is important for our local economy.

Come enjoy a ride on my special pedicab! Come create an experience you will never forget! Let me be your guide to a fun time enjoying our beautiful city while also keeping it green!



Like me on Facebook under "Kevin Spangler" to see the pictures and videos of how much fun my customers are already having. Call me to schedule a ride or just flag me down if you see me riding toward you.

Originally published in the April 2016 edition of Groundcover News.

The neglected wildcatters of Dallas

PAUL RAYJAY WATSON
STREETZine

Darick walks four miles to his overnight dishwashing job in downtown Dallas. In his free time, he spends hours sketching on scrap paper, designing sneakers. His work gets noticed only in Europe, where shoemakers have used his designs. Darick is also my friend, and he lives at a homeless shelter.

Darick is a modern wildcatter.

Wildcatters were long shots, digging for oil far from proven fields, in places where only wildcats roamed. Dallas became their backbone, a city that understood and bankrolled their gritty dreams.

The Dallas ethos is built on this spirit. But it often comes across as an irrational conviction, or something where failure is almost guaranteed. At times one might catch a glimpse of that spirit when hearing about billionaire Mark Cuban sleeping on the floor of a shared apartment or Mary Kay Ash, founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, risking her life's savings in her early days. Inspiring anecdotes from times past, right?

Wrong; the wildcatter spirit continues to this very day. Take, for example, my friend John. He was born in Florida and raised in a drug-abused family. Now, he lives in Dallas, where he started a nutritional manufacturing company that distributes to consumers globally. Or Jennifer, a self-described midwesterner at heart. She resigned her secure consulting job and started a company in Dallas, which is now working with a consortium of municipalities to build "smart cities."

Unfortunately, in present-day Dallas, the wildcatters themselves suffer neglect.

In my time visiting with friends at shelters across Dallas, I've met a city of untapped entrepreneurs. There is Demetrius, who once ran his own trucking company before a family crisis left him homeless; Mark and his brother, who use his old car as a makeshift taxi with remarkable hustle; and Gerald, who cuts hair like a painter on canvas. Like Darick, they are practicing entrepreneurialism.

It's not that Dallas lacks resources. Job training and medical attention are built into the ecosystem. But these entrepreneurs don't fit the mold. They are often trapped by past run-ins with the law or are fighting off addictions, making them "untouchables." Their voices drowned in the din of programs.

"It's nothing new," said Willy, a program officer with a foundation offering job-skills training at homeless shelters. "I often see sparks of extraordinary talent in my line of work. The problem is, it's extremely hard to position a talent for funding. The donor-guided programs are only focused to enable underserved communities. And our hands are tied, either because it's beyond our scope, or it's a task requiring uncommon initiative."

Still, uncommon initiatives in entrepreneurial ventures are not new to Dallas. Take Peter Brodsky, a contrarian capitalist. In a gamble spanning 10 years, he turned an abandoned South Dallas mall into a "work and play" system for the community. The once-failing asset anchors a medical facility and houses office spaces and call centers, creating jobs and sparking commercial buzz, lifting all boats in an economically challenged neighborhood.

Or consider the PNC Bank mobile units servicing the "unbanked" at shelters across Dallas. "We want to be the modern banker for residents at shelters," said Hannah Lopez, assistant manager of an Orange-Blue bank on wheels. "We see the person we help today as a striving employee, or perhaps a future small business owner." While all banks are required to service the low-income, PNC Bank's strategy of financial inclusion bets on the possibilities among the improbable.

After studying 150 strategic moves spanning more than 100 years across 30 industries, professors W.C Kim and Renee Mauborgne concluded in their global bestseller, Blue Ocean, that the key to creating an uncontested market space and making competition irrelevant is discovering untapped markets. "The key is to reach beyond existing demand. It's about creating not competing; about focusing on non-customers; about breaking the value-cost tradeoff," they explained.

The wildcatters are precisely that: the untapped market existing beyond the value-cost tradeoff.

It's time well-wishers took a second look at people experiencing homelessness, regardless of where they lay their heads at night.

Courtesy of STREETZine / INSP.ngo

Always look on the bright side of life

PEDRO CAMPOS
Groundcover vendor No. 652

My life as a wanderer has been — and still is — difficult. Even with everything I have learned and achieved, I cannot say I feel safe, and certainly not comfortable. What I can say is that I have experienced moments of complete happiness. I have had the privilege of discovering incredible places such as Chicago, Detroit, Ann Arbor, New York City and Poughkeepsie. I have witnessed wonders, built loyal and caring friendships, and lived some of the wildest adventures imaginable.

My arrival in Chicago was uncommon — or at least unexpected. People helped me without my asking. They offered rides, information, food, weed and something even more valuable: genuine American kindness. I heard the phrase "I've got your back" many times, and they truly meant it. For two days, I didn't even touch my wallet. That generosity mattered deeply to me, especially because I had just left my home country behind. I was vulnerable, uncertain — and yet, supported.

From Chicago, my destination was Fenton, Mich. I took a bus to Detroit, and during the ride, memories surfaced from the many times I had visited Ann Arbor back in 1995, when I lived in Fenton. I knew Ann Arbor was home to the University of Michigan, and the map showed that stopping there could save time on my way north. More than that, I wanted to explore. I had no schedule, no commitments.

When I stepped off the bus at the train station, I was immediately enchanted. Walking through the streets, I was struck by the beauty of the city and the warmth of its people. Ann Arbor felt almost magical — like something out of a fairy tale — and it gifted me countless memorable moments. I was welcomed so deeply that, as a friend once said, "You were looking for a home, and you found one." And it was true. That is why I call Ann Arbor my American hometown.

Instead of spending just a couple of weeks in Fenton on my way to New York, I ended up staying in Michigan for almost a year. I've returned twice since then. If I had to highlight the best moments, I would mention the Huron River, the Law School that looks like Hogwarts, the Groundcover News office at Bethlehem United Church of Christ, the breakfast church at Saint Andrew's, the Starbucks at Liberty and State (my favorite corner), long bike rides and, above all, the dear friends I made along the way.

Detroit, unfortunately, I never had the chance to know as well as I wanted. I was usually just passing through, often in a hurry — still long enough to get into trouble. There's so much I want to experience there: a Lions game, Greek Town, cross to Canada, the city itself. In March, I'll finally have the chance. I'm heading to Detroit for a concert. We'll see how it goes.

New York City, on the other hand, gave me time and intensity. The city is fascinating, with layers of architectural history stamped onto its buildings and a deeply multicultural, cosmopolitan soul, especially in Manhattan. I've been everywhere. I can honestly say Manhattan is my playground, and Brooklyn is my hood.

New York hits you hard, like a slap in the face. Or, as the song says, "Americamacka, is like licking honey off of a knife." Sweet, dangerously so. New York is not for everyone. You can arrive easily, but staying is another story. Belonging is even harder. I've tried three times already, and three times the city spun me out, dizzy and exhausted. I had to escape before losing my sanity — twice back to Michigan, and now to Poughkeepsie.

I needed distance from the noise, the rush, the violence, the constant hustle. I needed to heal, recover and rehabilitate — to bite the Big Apple. And I will. I'm not afraid. All things considered, I think I'm doing well. I survived the winter, stayed safe and stayed busy. This time, I'm not starting from scratch. I have my belongings: good clothes, gear, phones, cameras, shoes, a bike — even books and board games. I love them. And most importantly, my application for permanent housing has been approved. I'm now on the waiting list for an apartment in Manhattan, hopefully before my birthday in July.

Last year, at the end of October, after leaving the shelter and wandering for a month, I headed north from the city along an ancient Native American trail that begins on Broadway and stretches all the way to Albany and beyond. I didn't know where I was going or how long I would be gone. I had my tent, my courage, and not enough clothes for the cold that was coming.

I rode my bike forty miles north from the Bronx, then took the train to the last stop. My plan was simple: camp at Black Creek Park under the full moon, regroup and return. But as I researched the Hudson River region, Dutchess County caught my attention — its natural beauty, its opportunities. What was meant to be a weekend became a new chapter. I settled in Poughkeepsie, and I've been living here ever since.

This place isn't perfect, but it's the safest I've felt since being repatriated. For the first time in a long while, I found peace of mind in a positive environment. I've been productive, too. I recently wrote six new poems to submit to "The New Yorker." I also wrote my first book — a cosmic fable for children, Sophie Star Adventure — as a gift for my seven-year-old niece Thais. One of my poems was selected by PoetTreeTown to be printed and displayed at the Ann Arbor downtown library. One way or another, I made it into the library — and that is a great honor.

To see my words recognized, written in English, moves me deeply. From the streets to the university, from Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti, people read my work. They understand me — or at least try. I may come on strong sometimes, but always with respect. I recognize the responsibility that comes with being heard, and for that, I am grateful.

As for New York City — I won't give up. Actually, I'm just getting started. Many of my desires have already been fulfilled: walking around Daredevil's neighborhood, Hell's Kitchen, attending Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, playing chess at Union Square, visiting the Statue of Liberty, standing in Times Square. I've ridden my bike around Central Park, Broadway, Columbia and Harlem. I've been to a couple of plays, a rooftop party and an underground party. I've eaten great food, talked to people and improved my English. I visited the Museum of Natural History and even had one of my poems printed in a local newspaper called Street Voices. I'm working hard, preparing myself for the fourth round.

In the middle of the civil war we seem to be living through today in our country, I've managed to keep moving forward — focusing, healing confirming my purpose. When the snow melts, I plan to finally put my ideas into practice: negotiating my writing, my art. I've chosen a spot along the westbound trail that will be my corner. In the summer, I'll get a business license in Beacon, New York, a cultural and tourist hub just an hour from NYC in order to sell my writing and art.

I'm excited to explore these parks by bicycle, swim in rivers, climb mountains, chase waterfalls, meet people, get into a little trouble, smoke my

see **BRIGHT SIDE** page 16 ➡

When people opt to take the easy road in an ugly society "vanity is king"

JAMES MANNING
Groundcover vendor No. 16

There is a good reason why it is said the first thing we learn to do as human beings is lie. There's a certain convenience to it that we come to recognize well before we develop any sense of right and wrong. Sadly for the majority of us, we continue its practice when we do understand it to be wrong. Perhaps it is because through deception we often achieve the desired outcome, which can be easily viewed as rewarding for the act itself.

So as we are growing/developing, it's very likely that whatever repercussions a person experiences for being dishonest are probably a very light slap on the hand, if anything at all. Therefore, despite being told and knowing the act of lying is wrong, a person's view of lying becomes increasingly trivial. Now, take into account, this assessment is being made in the developing years of childhood where they have yet to interact with society at large, which also says dishonesty is supposed to be a negative trait. Yet its actions can only underscore its hypocrisy and corruption which, like the individual's experience, is often more rewarding than anything else.

I've always rather enjoyed studying the subject of philosophy. Unfortunately that's all it is, just various theories and viewpoints of the principles on which this world and society at large operate. It's not science or mathematics that has definitive laws that can't be protested or challenged no matter how arrogant a person is. However, the nature of relationships between people, so far as I've observed, has no such laws and involves countless gray areas, justifications and conditions. Humanity's track record for conflicts, wars and atrocities committed shows a recurring trend for negative perceptions or, at least, outcomes.

I find myself struggling to find any definitive explanation for such behavior, all while understanding this to be a fool's errand to a certain point. Hence all the various theories and interpretations; one, for example, being the social phenomenon known as Monkey See, Monkey Do. Basically large groups and up to whole societies will adopt whatever behaviors, beliefs and so on that they observe in others, as if it's a popular trend. This occurs so long as the behavior isn't universally accepted to be wrong, as some social taboo. In that case I think it would be closer to the similar yet slightly different case called mass hysteria. However this is all just my own personal observations and I don't claim to have a masters in human Psychology.

Everybody is naturally gonna try their level best to make sense of our far-from-perfect world with its often disconcerting elements that conflict with our personal ideologies. It goes without saying our experiences and fortunes in life are going to shape our outlook of the world and the need to understand the why of it.

Unfortunately, the whole notion of making sense of the world or rather humanity at large is of course a deeply personal one. That obvious fact makes this particular topic rather difficult to explain because by its nature it will completely go over the heads of some people, while being relatable for others. However, it's a viewpoint I have repeatedly attempted to share because my personal experiences unfortunately make acceptance of harsh, biased criticism absolutely not an option for me because I have the self-respect to refuse to give up on myself as well as life — regardless of how backwards it seems to function. As previously stated, I have my reasons for arriving at the conclusion that this world is plagued with corruption that never has or will sit right with me, and I refuse to take it lying down.

In summary, my endeavors to find any sense of Peace and Contentment through understanding why people seek material gain and power and attempt to subjugate others is simply an exercise in futility. Humanity's most basic instincts for self-preservation will ironically and inevitably destroy us. Those instincts show on the surface as arrogance masking fear, born of ignorance, making hatred commonplace. Despite the desire to believe our civilization is one of order that pursues a benevolent evolution, make no mistake our darkest fears and instincts for survival are fully exploited and used to keep us suspicious and ultimately threatened by one another. A distraction so genius and foolproof the majority of us are not even aware of it. And those who are are terrified of the consequences of any protest, especially if you have anything to lose. Those who want to resist often have nothing at all of power or influence and you would only achieve being labeled a terrorist. When you think about it, isn't that a label for anyone who would challenge the status quo? I've arrived to the point I no longer care about consequences since I've been subjected to endless labels and stereotypes leaving the only "job" society at large would tolerate seeing me employed in is likely a human test subject for viral and chemical agents, a trafficking victim or perhaps just simply keeping privatized prisons a lucrative industry.

I know this all must sound incredibly pessimistic and negative, but I have my reasons, found in an incredibly messed-up world. Also this isn't some dramatic self-serving manipulation either; almost laughably, I hate the idea of getting sympathy precisely because I hate the judgments made of me and their implied characteristics. I do desire the opportunity, the right to earn a better life for myself so, OK, perhaps the whole point I'm getting at is a little self-serving, but hey, I'm human despite popular belief.

But much more importantly I'd like to see us, the masses, stand up for ourselves rather than kill each other over grievances brought onto us by a bunch of elitist dicks. And perhaps the most crucial fact about this world I shouldn't need to leave you with … we outnumber them literally billions to one.

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following is our **Vendor Code of Conduct**, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- Groundcover will be distributed for a voluntary donation. I agree not to ask for more than the cover price or solicit donations by any other means.
- When selling Groundcover, I will always have the current biweekly issue of Groundcover available for customer purchase.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper or selling an issue more than 4 weeks old.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers and refrain from wearing it or other Groundcover gear when engaged in other activities.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff, and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor Corner Policy.
- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

If you would like to report a violation of the Vendor Code or leave positive review of a Vendor experience please email contact@groundcovernews.com or fill out the contact form on our website.

tax preparation **RESOURCE CORNER**

Tax day is April 15! The IRS is already accepting and processing tax returns; don't wait until the last day!

If your total income is less than $69,000 you likely have one or more cash benefits waiting and tax prep services are at no cost to you. Exact details vary based on the specific tax credit, your tax filing status and the number of people in your household. Some, but not all, tax credits require that you or your children have a Social Security Number.

FINDING TAX FORMS

Ann Arbor District Library branches offer physical copies of various federal tax forms beginning in late January. Librarians can print additional forms for no cost. Call (734) 327-4200 for more information.

Ypsilanti District Library offers tax forms, while supplies last, at the Whittaker and Superior branches. Call the library for more information. Whittaker branch: (734) 482-4110, x2411. Superior branch: x2431

Download necessary tax forms from the Michigan Department of Treasury website and check income tax refund status. www.michigan.gov/taxes

FILING HELP

The Housing Bureau for Seniors
Offering FREE tax return preparation in partnership with AARP Foundation! Appointments are offered Wednesdays and Fridays from February 4 - April 10. Trained volunteers will be able to provide a full federal and state return or complete the Michigan Property Tax Credits you qualify for. Past returns can be completed from 2022 onwards. *Call Housing Bureau for Seniors to schedule your appointment at 734-998-9341!*

United Way Southeastern Michigan
Tax preparation services are provided by IRS-certified non-profit partners, Accounting Aid Society and Wayne Metro Community Action Agency. Participation requirements include: make less than $69,000/year, have a Driver's License or picture ID, have a Social Security Card or ITIN, live in Washtenaw County. *Schedule your appointment at* united-waysem.org/resources/tax-preparation-assistance/

St. Francis of Assisi Parish
Offers tax help to individuals with limited income ($57,000.00 or less) and simple tax returns. Call the parish office at (734) 821-2121 to make an appointment to drop off your return. Services offered February through April. Assistance also available in Spanish.

Accounting Aid Society
In partnership with the United Way of Southeastern Michigan Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. Help with expert tax preparation, IRS support and guidance and home heating credits. Scheduling available now at 734-304-0943 or www.accountingaid-society.org Located at 2305 Platt Road, Ann Arbor.

ONLINE FILING

MyFreeTaxes.com
Free online service provided by United Way for preparing and filing your taxes. Must make $67,000 per year or less to use this service. Get started today at MyFreeTaxes.com

Need help with your pet?
Pet food pantry
Vet care
Temporary boarding
and more
FRIENDS FOR LIFE
Humane Society of Huron Valley
Helping keep pets with their people
(734) 661-3550

WINTER PROGRAM INFORMATION
DAY TIME WARMING SHELTER LOCATIONS:

Location	Address	Dates Available
Ypsilanti Freighthouse (Mon.- Thur., 8am-6pm)	100 Market Place Ypsilanti	Nov. 10, 2025 - March 31, 2026
Delonis Center (Weekends only)	312 W. Huron St. Ann Arbor	Nov. 10, 2025 - April 14, 2026
Lord of Light Lutheran Church	801 S. Forest Ave., Ann Arbor	Dec. 22, 2025 - Jan. 2, 2026 EXCEPT DECEMBER 25TH
Ann Arbor Friend's Meeting	1420 Hill St. Ann Arbor	December 25, 2025
St. Mary's Student Parish	331 Thompson St. Ann Arbor	Jan. 5, 2026 - Jan. 30, 2026
First Congregational Church	608 E. Williams St. Ann Arbor	Feb. 2, 2026 - Feb. 13, 2026
First Baptist Church	517 E. Washington St. Ann Arbor	Feb. 16, 2026 - March 27, 2026

All Washtenaw County office building lobbies are available as warming center sites during normal business hours.

Unless otherwise specificed, all above warming shelters operate Monday through Friday during normal business hours. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact the Delonis Center at **734-662-2829**. For updates, visit **bit.ly/washtenaw-warming**.

WASHTENAW COUNTY MICHIGAN 1826
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Collaborative solutions for a promising future

Last updated: 12/16/25

OVERNIGHT SHELTER INFORMATION

Winter shelter information: Winter daytime and overnight shelter accommodations are available throughout the winter shelter season from **November 10, 2025 - April 14, 2026** for any individual seeking emergency shelter during the cold winter months.

- **Daytime shelter** - Monday - Thursday, 8am - 6pm at the Ypsilanti Freighthouse (100 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198)
- **Overnight shelter** - Nighttime accommodations are at the Delonis Center; 312 W. Huron St., Ann Arbor, and at offsite locations including Congregation partners throughout the County, and there is an overnight shelter in Ypsilanti. During day-time hours, those seeking overnight shelter should first contact HAWC to obtain a referral for shelter at 734-961-1999.

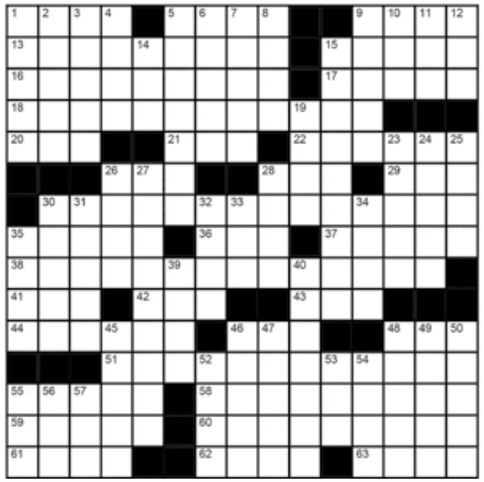
How do I get into the shelter?
Any individuals or families seeking emergency shelter please contact Housing Access of Washtenaw County (HAWC) at 734-961-1999 to obtain a referral to the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County (individuals), Alpha House (families), & SafeHouse (survivors). If it is after 5pm or weekend, if you're an individual, please come to or call the Delonis Center (734-662- 2829) and we'll assist serving you. Families, please come to or call Alpha House for assistance anytime at 734-822-0220.

What is provided at the shelter?
Individuals are provided a safe place to sleep each night and can access a wide variety of services including meals, case management, medical care, and most importantly help finding permanent housing.

For updates and more information: bit.ly/washtenaw-warming

CROSSWORD

International Network of Street Papers



ACROSS
1. Gulf war missile
5. ___ moss
9. "La Vie en Rose" singer
13. A step up from a cigarillo
15. "And there you are!"
16. Where one might dock their boat in Alaska?
17. Homeric epic
18. Sub-field of sociolinguistics dealing in regional differences
20. Clairvoyance, e.g.
21. If you're fishing for this, you may be in for a shock!
22. Small songbirds
26. Cooking meas.
28. Come together
29. When tripled, a Portland taqueria
30. What one might get at night school
35. Met offering
36. Always, in verse
37. Christmas songs
38. Antiestablishment movement
41. ___ de Triomphe
42. "Do or do not. There is no ___": Yoda
43. "___ the fields we go"
44. Cordwood units
46. Boar's mate
48. Ground cover
51. Relating to the formation of speech sounds
55. Austrian composer
58. Barcelona's locale
59. Bread spreads
60. Kind of agreement
61. Agenda
62. Geek
63. Congers

DOWN
1. Digger
2. ___ Major, home of Sirius
3. Open, as a bottle
4. Author Roald
5. Mental impression
6. Carry away, in a way
7. Star in Perseus
8. Old Chinese money
9. Coral colony member
10. Square root of IX
11. ___ mode
12. Beanie Babies, e.g.
14. Little piggy
15. Batman, for one
19. Crude group?
23. Less cordial
24. Oar pin
25. Without (Fr.)
26. Go bad
27. Untidy women
28. Expert
30. To the left, at sea
31. Wild card, often
32. Mysterious (Var.)
33. Calendar abbr.
34. ___ de force
35. Edible tubers
39. At one time, at one time
40. Area at risk of flooding
45. Locally feared noble gas
46. Suffix with sea or moon
47. Exterior
48. Weather balloon, for one
49. Bay window
50. Twosomes
52. Cultural figure
53. A pint, maybe
54. Strengthen, with "up"
55. A bunny's favorite scotch?
56. "Is that ___?" ("Anything else?")
57. Assent

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here

423 S. Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 734-665-6149

Bethlehem-ucc.org facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2

Bethlehem Church is home of the Groundcover office

UNITED in Christ's love for a JUST world

FEBRUARY 2026 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM

ECUMENICAL ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE: FEBRUARY 18 @ 7:00 PM

Please visit the church website at:
www.bethlehem-ucc.org for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.

Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither Do We. United Church of Christ

Sunday Worship Time
10:00 am In-person and via Live Stream

Sudoku ★★☆☆☆☆ 4puz.com

8			7		4			6
		4	6		5	3		
1								8
7	5	9				8	4	3
	1						6	
4	8	6				7	1	2
9								5
		3	2		8	1		
5			9		3			7

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS *February 6, 2026 edition*

C	H	O	C	■	O	C	T	A
L	E	V	O	■	P	R	I	M
O	M	E	N	■	E	A	T	E
P	E	R	F	O	R	M	I	N
■	■	■	E	R	A	S	■	■
C	O	R	T	E	S	■	L	E
A	L	I	T	■	■	F	I	B
D	I	G	I	T	A	L	C	O
E	V	E	■	A	G	A	I	N
T	E	L	E	T	E	X	T	■
■	■	■	P	A	L	■	■	■
■	G	L	O	R	I	F	I	C
S	I	A	N	■	M	I	L	K
A	R	M	Y	■	I	V	I	E
L	O	A	M	■	T	E	A	R

H	O	E	D					
U	M	B	O					
R	I	B	S					
N	G	A	R	T	S	■	■	■
■	■	T	E	A	■	■	■	■
L	E	E	S	H	O	R	E	■
■	F	I	B	R	O	■	P	E
C	O	M	P	U	T	E	R	■
■	N	E	V	E	■	■	■	■
B	A	R	D	E	D	■	■	■
■	■	O	R	C	A	■	■	■
N	S	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
S	L	O	E	■	■	■	■	■
I	R	E	■	■	■	■	■	■
S	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

3	9	1	4	5	7	6	8	2
2	5	7	6	8	9	3	1	4
4	6	8	2	1	3	9	5	7
5	7	2	3	9	8	1	4	6
9	1	6	5	4	2	8	7	3
8	4	3	7	6	1	2	9	5
1	2	5	8	7	6	4	3	9
6	8	4	9	3	5	7	2	1
7	3	9	1	2	4	5	6	8

Attention

LA SHAWN COURTWRIGHT
Groundcover writer

I do not hate anyone
I say
Yet
Please do not try to do that
to me
Talk to me that way

Matter of fact fact
Last time I checked
YOU
ARE
NOT
IN
CHARGE
OF
ME
When was the last time
YOU
LOOKED
IN
THE
MIRROR
What did
YOU
SEE
I am sure of this
It was not ME
So, please
'Spand your attentions
OUTSIDE
OF ME
I Ain
Gotta
problem
with that You See

Why are YOU
Payin' so much
attention na' me
Get outside
YO head
I am not
constrained
Liberated by your tyranny

The only shame is
PERHAPS
Both of our heart
Have been, are broken

Not mending
So much of a tragedy

Let us pause,
only momentarily

Cause if you
Think this'
The end

I do not
Agree

What do you
believe still needs
to be discussed?

Can we just
talk about it

I'd prefer that
Cause just as you
We all seem to have
More to do!

LOVE ...

EMERI JADE BEY
Groundcover vendor No. 660

Love is patient, kind and doesn't judge. Love is to be nurtured and worth being loyal for. Love is forgiveness and Overstanding. We can learn about love from the way God loves us. God's grace and kindness. Very extra ordinary indeed. Because Even when we make mistakes we can find love within and through others who know what love is. I am thankful for **LOVE**.

untitled 2

AUGUSTINE JAY
Groundcover vendor No. 678

Why do I make the
behold then out from in mine eyes
the intrigue kept beyond your guise
a wonder hidden cannot fly
above and over demons
if truly you can see whats there
from where i sit, from in my chair
i beg you please do not compare
your own to what i see as fair
for home is within reason

VALENTINE'S DAY WORD SEARCH

by Emeri Jade Bey

D	G	P	A	O	C	I	W	S	S	L	T	T	A
T	K	I	S	S	E	S	L	P	C	N	L	E	C
T	E	T	I	R	G	I	E	D	I	N	N	E	R
I	R	T	E	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	R
L	E	T	T	E	R	S	N	E	C	A	N	D	Y
C	A	R	D	S	R	G	T	E	E	O	I	E	I
E	I	S	U	E	E	A	S	R	E	W	O	L	F
E	S	E	H	E	D	R	C	R	N	R	A	E	G
T	I	R	U	P	A	R	T	I	E	S	E	H	D
S	S	S	G	T	W	N	L	N	E	T	E	E	R
T	T	O	S	C	U	P	I	D	R	R	A	S	S
E	D	P	G	A	L	E	N	T	I	N	E	S	R
S	E	L	C	S	A	N	L	G	A	L	A	U	K
S	E	I	R	R	E	B	W	A	R	T	S	I	T

LETTERS
DINNER
CARDS
KISSES
PARTIES
CUPID
DATE
HUGS
CHOCOLATE
STRAWBERRIES
GALENTINES
CANDY
FLOWERS

Creamy cauliflower gratin

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

Ingredients:
1 medium cauliflower head, cut into small florets
1 1⁄2 Tbsp olive oil
1 cup finely chopped onion
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbsp cornstarch
1 (14-oz.) can light coconut milk
1/8 tsp ground nutmeg
3⁄4 tsp sea salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
Generous 1/3 cup parmesan cheese

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Cut cauliflower into small, even florets and steam in a large pot with a steamer basket (covered) until tender when pierced with a fork (about 15 minutes). Remove from heat and set aside uncovered to cool slightly.

Heat a large oven-safe skillet over medium heat. Add the olive oil and onion and sauté until the onion becomes tender and translucent, about 3-5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute or until fragrant. Reduce the heat to low. Add the cornstarch and whisk to incorporate. Cook for 1 minute. Pour in the coconut milk a little at a time, whisking constantly to incorporate. Go slowly. Continue until all of the milk has been added.

Simmer for 8-10 minutes or until thickened, whisking frequently. Add the nutmeg, salt and pepper. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed, adding more nutmeg for warmth or pepper to taste. Add the steamed cauliflower to the sauce and toss thoroughly to coat. Taste once more and add more salt if needed. (Note: If you didn't use an oven-safe skillet, you can transfer the mixture to an 8 x 8-inch baking dish now.)

Sprinkle the top with parmesan and bake uncovered for 12-15 minutes, until the top is golden brown and crisp. Remove from the oven and let stand for 5-10 minutes before serving. An excellent side dish.

➡ **BRIGHT SIDE** from page 11

weed, maybe try some mushrooms, drink fresh spring water and breathe the cleanest air I can find. New York State concentrates its urban chaos in a small southeastern corner; it's mostly a vast, beautiful park, and I'm eager to discover it.

Before that, I'll make one more trip to Michigan. I bought a ticket to see my favorite band, Thievery Corporation, on March 18 in Detroit. I'll head to Ann Arbor the next day. I'm also working on a more sociological article titled "Spelling the Truth," about the lies we're all tired of hearing and possible paths toward clarity. I plan to attend the Groundcover News March 20 newspaper launch meeting, record a session at the library, reunite with friends and soak in some good Michigan love.

In April, I'll meet a great friend from Brazil who's coming to teach a class at Harvard as part of his postdoctoral research in biophysics. Then we'll head down to New York City together.

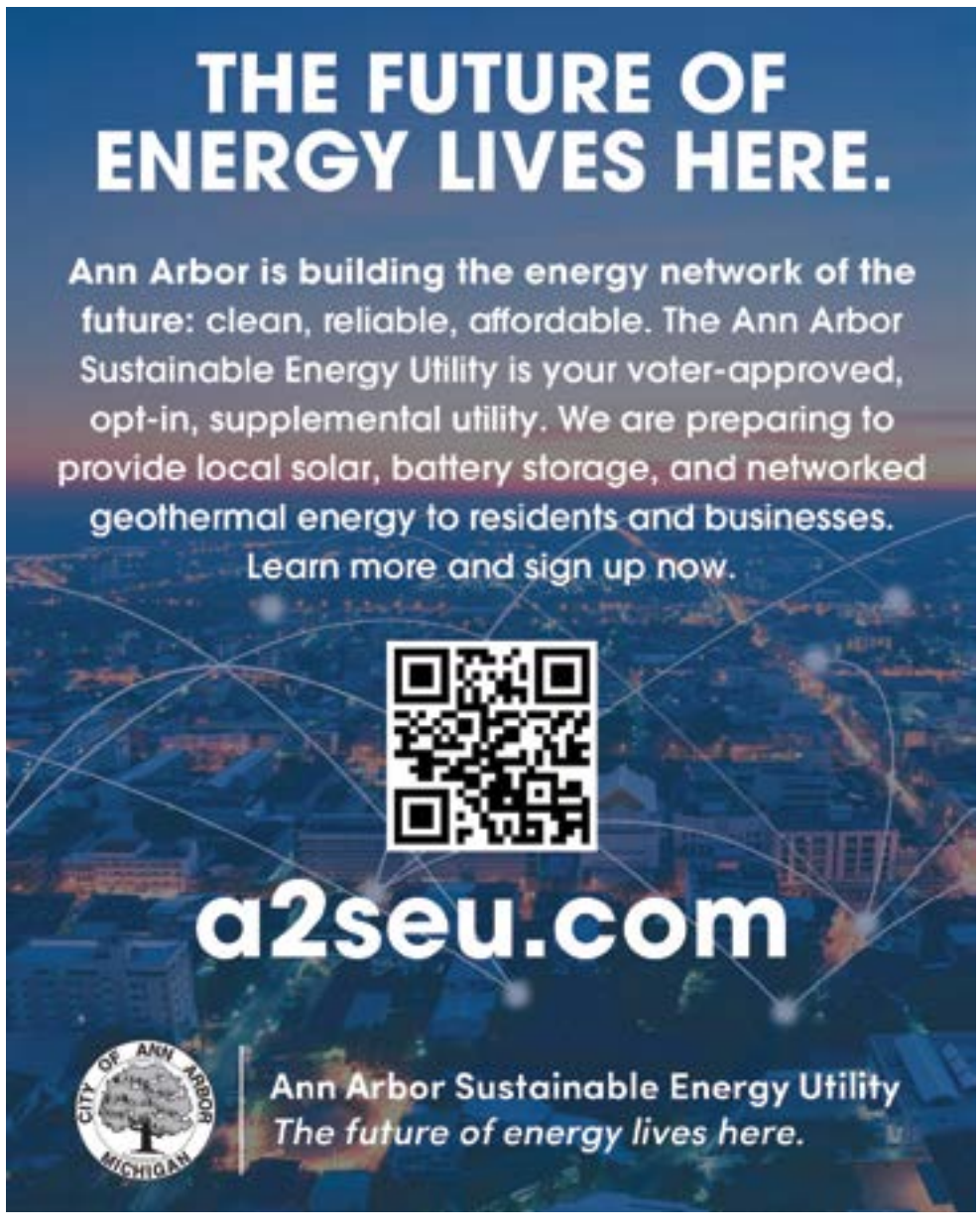
When my friends back in Brazil ask how I'm doing, I tell them the truth: I'm still struggling. I still have a lot to learn — language, culture, laws. But I'm moving forward, planting roots while staying in motion. It's a long road. Still, I feel like I'm winning. Between the hard moments, I've experienced real joy — especially the gift of being healthy and free.

I'm starting my life over — not with dreams, because I'm awake — but with plans.

God, I'm blessed.

That's why I always look at the bright side of life.

Follow @pedrocamposbrazil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Ann Arbor is building the energy network of the future: clean, reliable, affordable. The Ann Arbor Sustainable Energy Utility is your voter-approved, opt-in, supplemental utility. We are preparing to provide local solar, battery storage, and networked geothermal energy to residents and businesses. Learn more and sign up now.
a2seu.com
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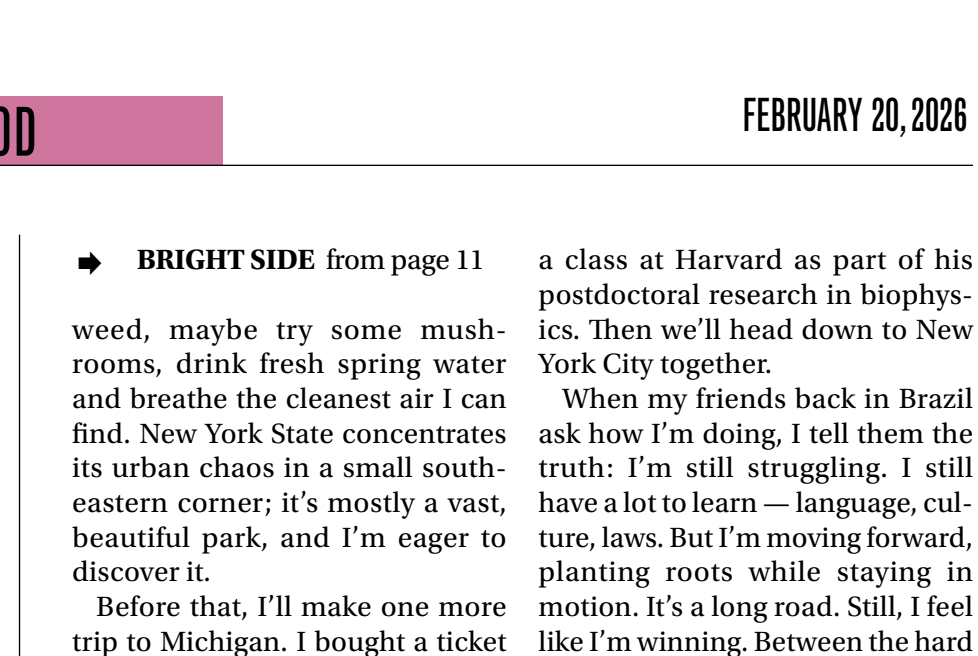
The future of energy lives here.


St. Francis of Assisi Parish
"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and am here; I did not come on my own, but he sent me."
+ Christ Jesus (John 8:42)
Come Worship With Us!
Mass Schedule
Saturday 5 pm (English) & 7 pm (Spanish)
Sunday 8:30 am, 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, 5 pm
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